

CHAIRIL ANWAR'S HERITAGE: THE FEAR OF STULTIFICATION--
ANOTHER SIDE OF MODERN INDONESIAN LITERATURE¹

Hendrik M. J. Maier

There were, indeed, some things politicians and intellectuals in Jakarta had to get used to in 1950. After four years of diplomatic and military maneuvers the Republic of Indonesia was now recognized as a sovereign state and the poet Chairil Anwar was dead. It was time for a retrospect: the mystification of the Revolution was soon to begin. Concurrently, it was time for a prospect: ideals and dreams could be realized in the newly created state. From now on not Amsterdam but Jakarta would be the metropolis for life in the archipelago, the untouchable center of domination, at once inspiring and crippling.

"My body is still and alone--stories and events are gone by, stultified"²--those were Chairil's words in one of his last poems, and they were to have an almost prophetic meaning: fear of stultification, of silence and loneliness, was to take hold of those he left behind in the metropolis of the new state.

Indonesia is a huge country, in which the diversity of languages and cultures is enormous. Policy makers in Jakarta considered it one of their primary tasks to impose some sort of unity upon this multiformity, and the motto "Unity in Diversity" that was chosen for the emblem of the new nation, should primarily be interpreted as a political device; centrifugal forces had, somehow, to be balanced by a general feeling of belonging together. The question of how such a genuinely felt nationalism could be concretized had set free a great amount of inventivity. Already before the Japanese occupation there had been lively dialogues on this topic, which had created a variety of perspectives, each with its own discursive formation, speaking from its own concepts and operating from its own ideological institutions. And wherever there are dialogues, there is a desire to gain authority, "to be in the truth." Literary life in Jakarta was just one of the circuits in which these dialogues continued after Independence had been achieved. After Chairil's death the struggle for authority was to take new forms.

Before long the word "crisis" emerged in essays and treatises, at congresses and discussions. Are we a past generation? Is the Revolution completed? What really happened in the past four years? And in the four centuries of Western penetration? There was growing uncertainty, with its inevitable complement: uneasiness. How should we go on? What attitude should Indonesia assume toward other nations? What kind of economic policy should we follow in the years ahead? How should Indonesian culture be given form? And what role should be

1. This article is based on an essay published in *De Gids* (1983): 685-95, "De Lekra: angst voor verstarring." It should primarily be read as an supplement to the currently authoritative presentation of developments in modern Indonesian literature--and supplements tend to create uneasiness.

2. Chairil Anwar, *Kerikil tadjam dan Jang terampas dan jang putus* (Jakarta: Pustaka Rakjat, 1949), p. 51.

reserved for the literature, written in Malay, the language that, in 1928, had been declared the national language?

Jakarta was not, of course, the only place where Malay literature was produced in printed form and the quality and aim of this "modern Indonesian literature" was discussed. In other urban centers like Medan, Yogyakarta, Padang, and Surabaya, too, people were trying their hand with such recently developed genres as short stories, novels, and free verse, and they managed to have their work published. None of them, however, was able to compete successfully with the products of the new metropolis. "Modern Indonesian literature" was the literature that was authorized as such by intellectuals and artists in Jakarta--that was an accepted fact. The people who lived close to the political center were to set the tone, without, however, being powerful enough to gain full control over literary life in the archipelago as a whole.

This so-called modern literature was surrounded by a wealth of traditional art forms which, in the new Republic, were perpetuated by those living in the countryside and in the poorer urban areas, separated from "modern" art forms in almost every conceivable way: in world view, in presentation, in values. New terms were coined, not only for the endeavors of the Jakarta elite--*kebudayaan modern, kebudayaan nasional*--but also for these more traditional forms of art--*kebudayaan daerah, kebudayaan lokal*.

The creation of the Republic of Indonesia was concurrent with the emergence of the concept of cultural diversity and the desire for cultural unity. For those in the capital, the relationship between national culture and regional cultures, between unity and diversity, became an urgent problem. How far was it possible for the latter, so varied and multiform, to be integrated into one single unity? How far should the diversity be maintained? How should national culture be defined vis-à-vis regional culture?

In May 1949 Chairil Anwar had died--very young, very appropriate. Before a month had passed, the myth around his person and his work was already taking shape through articles in newspapers and journals. Chairil's glory seemed definitely sanctified by an essay published some time later by H. B. Jassin, the literary critic who was to become the leading tastemaker of the fifties. Its title is significant enough: "Chairil Anwar, the leader of the Generation of '45." "Who is the one who brought about a radical break in Indonesian literature? It was Chairil Anwar, the revolutionary poet of Indonesia, the leader of what was soon to be called the Generation of 45."³

Almost everybody was willing to agree with Jassin on one point at least: Chairil had been an innovator of form. His poetry opened new vistas to modern Indonesian literature by its economy and ambiguity of expression, and its concise and precise language certainly showed that the Malay language, now warmly promoted as the national language of Indonesia, had great possibilities for literary expression. As for its content, however, opinions tended to diverge. Feelings of loneliness, fear, and dissolution dominated there over ideas of anti-fascism and anti-colonialism; personal feelings were glorified at the cost of the revolutionary fire--and the question could be raised as to whether such poetry could be considered representative of the National Revolution. Had Chairil made an important contribution to modern Indonesian literature, to the new national Indonesian culture? Or should his work be dismissed as another irrelevant relict of the past?

3. H. B. Jassin, *Kesusasteraan Indonesia modern dalam kritik dan essay* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1954), p. 151.

In the very year of his death a number of Chairil's poems were published in two tiny volumes by two different publishers; names of the editors are missing and so is any kind of justification for the selection and presentation of the poems. Sloppy books they were, unworthy of the fame of the "Poet of the Revolution." The next year Rivai Apin and Asrul Sani took possession of Chairil's name by publishing *Tiga Menguak Takdir*, a collection of poems of the three of them, at yet a third publishing house.⁴ In the years of the Revolution, Rivai and Asrul had cooperated closely with Chairil in "Gelanggang" [Arena], the cultural column in the serious weekly *Siasat*. In "Gelanggang," the preface of the collection claims, the authors had tried to create a meeting place for the arts ["Kunstkring"], only to realize that what was needed was not a meeting place but, rather, a completely new generation with its own world vision ["Weltanschauung"], which should be defined not in terms of one fundamental line, but of mutual respect for one another's perspectives. *Tiga Menguak Takdir* was published "in memory of a beginning that will never end."

It is not clear whether Chairil himself had been actively involved in the construction of this preface. Nor is it clear whether he himself selected the poems that were published in this volume side by side with the poems of his comrades. Naturally Asrul and Rivai had the right to proclaim themselves heirs of the hero of the intellectual circles of Jakarta--but it was apparently this very precociousness which sentenced them to stultification: neither has produced any literary work of importance since. It is as though their literary vitality had died with Chairil. The "Surat Kepertjajaan" [Letter of Belief] which the group of artists around "Gelanggang" published in early 1950 did not dissolve the atmosphere of uncertainty: witness the discussions about the crisis in literature and society in the years that followed.

Manifestoes are usually the expressions of a distinct ambiguity and are, hence, open to various interpretations. They both reflect concepts and ideas that have been around for some time and, at the same time, they try to give a new impetus to implementation of these ideas and concepts by formulating them as carefully as possible. Conclusion and conjuration: in the "Surat Kepertjajaan" the emphasis is clearly on the latter. It betrays a nostalgia for the chaos and the resultant feelings of freedom in the Revolutionary years when living in Jakarta had been a thrill. The hazy and lighthearted tone in which Asrul, Rivai and their friends present their ideas is striking. The unfinished Revolution ("we hold that the revolution in our own country is not yet finished"), Universalism ("we are the true heirs of world culture and we must perpetuate this culture in our own way"), Humanism ("the important thing for us to find is man"), the self-evidence of the link between artist and people ("our estimation of our environment [society] is the estimation of people who are aware of the reciprocal influences of society and the artist"), the demand for freedom and tolerance ("we shall oppose all attempts improperly to restrict or obstruct our examination of standards")--the formulations are so loose that it is impossible to take the statement too seriously, the more so because of that ironic undertone: "our national character as Indonesians does not merely derive from our dark brown skins, our black hair or our protruding foreheads, but rather from what we emphasize in the expression of our feelings and thoughts."⁵

4. *Tiga menguak takdir* was published by Balai Pustaka; *Kerikil tadjam dan Jang terampas dan jang putus* had been published by Pembangunan/Djembatan, and *Deru tjampur debu* by Pustaka Rakjat.

5. See A. Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967), p. 127.

What exactly was the aim of this statement? Was it the pathetic pomposity of youth? An effort to command admiration in literary circles? An effort to claim authority over the literary revolution that Chairil had initiated? Or, perhaps, nothing but an attempt to mask the creative impotence, to exorcize the fear of stultification? It is hard to distill from the Letter of Belief an artistic credo, or a world vision, or even a political stand.

Again and again, Chairil's heirs were to claim proudly that they refused to have their freedom restricted by political considerations. In the spirit of their hero, they were of the opinion that universal values are operating in the arts and that this primarily demands artistic integrity. Works of art are to be measured by a set of criteria that are essentially absolute in character; the political perspective from which the individual artist is working should have no influence on the evaluation of the artistic merits of his work. H. B. Jassin set himself the task of elaborating this vision of art; he called it "Universal Humanism." This was the creed that was to exercise a strong hegemony in the literary life of the metropolis; initially, there was hardly any serious challenge to the authority of the self-appointed Generation of '45. Chairil Anwar--the man and his work--was to loom over Jakarta's intellectual life for a long time to come. A cultural hero with whom everybody had to come to terms.

Not all artists were willing to support the glorification of Chairil Anwar as the symbol of the Revolution. Not all intellectuals agreed with the notions of Universal Humanism. In the discussions over Chairil's heritage a conflict was taking shape, both in literature and politics--and those are usually in line.

Some months after publication of the "Surat Kepertjajaan," the Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Lekra, the Institute of People's Culture) was founded in Jakarta. Closely involved in its foundation were D. N. Aidit and Njoto, the two young men who, with some congenial spirits, were to gain control over the Partai Komunis Indonesia in 1952. The essayist and poet A. S. Dharta (who used Klara Akustia as his pen name) became the Institute's first secretary.⁶ The Lekra, too, formulated a manifesto. It was termed the "Mukadimah," an Arabic word for Introduction, a clear wink towards Islam.

Compared with the playful multi-significance of the "Surat Kepertjajaan," the "Mukadimah" reads like an example of solidity. Heavy, serious, in clear political jargon.

It is a certainty that the failure of the Revolution of August 1945 implies another threat to the Indonesian people; once again they may be brought into servitude, not only politically, economically, and militarily, but also culturally. The failure of the Revolution of August 1945 also means the failure of the cultural workers to destroy colonial culture and replace it by a democratic culture, a People's culture. The failure of the Revolution of August 1945 means that feudal and imperialistic culture is given the chance to continue its activities, to poison and destroy the character and the soul of the Indonesian People.

The aim of People's culture is described as "establishing a Democratic People's

6. For more information on the foundation and the first years of the Lekra, see the Lekra-pamphlet *Lekra menjambut Kongres Kebudayaan* (Jakarta: Lekra, 1952), and Yahaya Ismail, *Pertumbuhan, perkembangan dan kejatuhan Lekra di Indonesia* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1972).

Republic" and the concept of People's culture is presented in prescriptive terms:

It should be the stimulus of the masses, the source that incessantly creates enthusiasm and revolutionary fire that can not be extinguished. It has to sing, to praise, to describe the democratic struggle. It has to fight, demolish, destroy, and overcome imperialism and feudalism. People's culture is obliged to teach and instruct the People to become the hero of its own struggle.

The "Mukadimah" ends with an appeal:

We invite the cadres of the People's movement, in particular the cadres of the workers' and the peasants' movement, we invite all progressive and patriotic intellectuals and students to pay a disciplined attention to the problems of People's culture.

This was the way Aidit, Njoto, Dharta, and Joebaar Ajoeb wanted to ward off the fear of stultification, the feelings of crisis. The "Mukadimah" sounds grim and aggressive, and no doubt pompous as well, but, at any rate, it is a manifesto in which a vision of the future prevails, rather than a nostalgia for the past: it expresses severe criticism of the current situation, offers suggestions for what should be done to change it for the better, and calls for solidarity and cooperation.

The group around "Gelanggang" was a loosely organized one, so loose that it is hard to call it a group at all: there was a manifesto that justified its existence; there was a widely respected guardian of quality and integrity; there was great sympathy for it among leading politicians, administrators, and editors; there was a wide variety of journals and newspapers that were willing to publish the work of its supporters. And furthermore each one went his or her own way in struggling against the feelings of crisis and disorientation. Journals and magazines appeared and died. Contacts with Europe and the United States remained close. And there were discussions. Many discussions.

Within the Lekra group things were different. They had a statement of belief that indicated what was going wrong and how this could be corrected in an all-conclusive manner. The Institute Secretariat in Jakarta set up branches in various towns of the archipelago, the dedicated members of which could work together to coordinate the artistic activities that sooner or later were to have an effect on the People. Some newspapers and magazines were willing to publish articles by Lekraists. Contacts were made with Eastern Europe and China.

In its early years the Institute was not very effective as an organization--rules and regulations were not formulated until 1957 at the second National Conference, held in Jakarta naturally. As its secretary-general would summarize the first decade of fast growth in 1959, activities themselves were more important than the coordination of activities. What was important was that the Institute was potentially present in the main urban areas: whenever the Communist Party wanted to mobilize the local population for a demonstration or a rally, Lekra-members--poets and painters--were able to give artistic and, hence propagandistic, assistance.

The artists and intellectuals who looked to Universal Humanism for inspiration also had ties with politics, but they tried, more or less intentionally, to minimize those ties, claiming that a work of art had to be judged on the basis of its aesthetic qualities, no matter from which ideology it had been created. Most of the Universal Humanists felt a natural sympathy for the PSI and Masjumi, the political parties which, in their pragmatic and sober approach

to economic and social problems, underestimated the importance of the expressive aspects of politics and, in a tumultuous decade, were gradually isolated by President Sukarno.

In the first years, A. S. Dharta presented himself as the most eloquent spokesman of the Lekra-group in Jakarta. In a number of provocative essays and lectures he managed to give a profile to the concept of a People's culture by showing what was wrong in Indonesian society as it was developing. Polemics, the aggressive invitation for a dialogue, is the best way to make space for oneself: attacks were focussed on Chairil Anwar and his heirs. Dharta was willing to agree with Jassin that Chairil may indeed have invented new forms of expression: an upheaval in society necessarily brings along an upheaval in literature. But with so many social and economic problems still waiting for a definite solution, the individualistic, if not anarchistic, attitude towards life discernible in Chairil's poetry was thoroughly reprehensible. In the uncompleted Revolution the glorification of Chairil's hedonism and subjectivism was out of place, and his idea that an artist is primarily responsible to himself for his art should be rejected as sheer nonsense. Are we not, first of all, part of a community and responsible for its well-being as a whole? The norms of individual behavior are not to be found within an individual; they are determined from without. One cannot live in society and be free from society: artists and intellectuals, too, should be aware of what is going on in their immediate environment and in practice this meant that they should acknowledge political color. The idea that art should be measured in terms of universal values as propagated by the "Letter of Belief" was, in Dharta's view, nothing but another manifestation of that strange Western concept of "art for art's sake": how could an author be creative without being thoroughly influenced by his particular environment and without influencing that environment? Concepts like "universal art" and "humanism" were dangerous because they exempted the Indonesian artists from their obligation to take a political stand on the concrete problems of the new Republic and to take sides.

For Dharta it was an objective fact that literary life is closely intertwined with developments in society. "Literary development is the history of two forces with conflicting interests in the field of literature. It is a struggle between the force that defends conservatism and the force that aspires for progress." Thus, art is an integral part of political life: "the further literature is removed from society, the stronger the class which does not want any change in social structures and the weaker the class which desires the materialization of a new society."

Implicitly yet clearly, Dharta called for a new society in which the People, the class of the suppressed, would be the sovereign ruler. Artists and intellectuals should throw in their lot with those who were trying to bring this transformation about, and hence Lekra's calls for an "art for society," an "art for the People": artists had the task to help create the circumstances in which the radical transformation could be realized.⁷ From such a standpoint, the enemy is easily visible, the attack easily launched. Yet, Lekra's frontal attacks on Universal Humanism were initially bound to fail. Dharta's rhetoric lacked the authority and persuasion needed to convince his opponents; Jakarta intellectuals

7. See, for instance, A. S. Dharta's "Prae-advies" and his explanations in the minutes of the Cultural Congress, held in Bandung, Indonesia, *Madjalah Kebudayaan* (djan-febr-mrt 1952), pp. 76-169, and his essay "Kepada seniman universal," published in *Beberapa Paham Angkatan 45*, ed. Aoh k. Hadimadja (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1952), pp. 82-91.

still had the feeling that the whole world was at their feet, to discover and to explore. The model of Western democracy was being experimented with and there was still a great deal of optimism that things could only make a turn for the better and that the uncanny feelings of crisis and stultification were merely temporary, to be exorcized by being denied in public dialogues and discussions. Almost everyone rejected the idea that something might be wrong with the development of modern Indonesian literature--the number of words spent on the subject, however, was suspicious and the tone of the discussions was shrill.

Although not very effective in the beginning, Lekra discourse did introduce a new element into metropolitan culture. Dharta, Boejoeng Saleh, and Joebaar Ajoeb, Lekra's main proponents, acquired renown for their militancy and aggressiveness. They presented their new ideas in a clear and uncompromising style, reminiscent of the publications of the Communist Party and using the new national language in an innovative manner. In their essays they were very outspoken and polemical, at conferences and congresses they caused fear, irritation, and ridicule among their opponents by their debating techniques. They were provocative, in short, asking for trouble. As a rule Indonesians tend to evade open conflicts; Lekraists violated the rules of the game as set by the elite and they had to pay a price for this impertinence: they remained outsiders in the trend-setting intellectual circles in Jakarta: "PKI stalwarts . . . were at best on the fringes of the new national elite, and they were uncomfortably aware of their lack of centrality to the urban high culture that centered on Jakarta."⁸

In 1950, the PKI was a small party; it had to operate on the margins of life in Jakarta, both politically and culturally.⁹ Jakarta refused to forget events in Madiun in 1948 where the Communists had allegedly tried to acquire control over the Revolution; it made the PKI vulnerable to attacks. Moreover, the Party's desire for a total transformation of Indonesian society was certainly not shared by all politicians and intellectuals, not by the Muslims, not by the military, and even not by the nationalists. The "treason of Madiun" could be called up whenever the Party's enemies thought it appropriate to do so: the PKI was an unreliable element.

Considering the unwillingness of so many groups to bring about radical changes in the new Republic and the threat that the Party might again be cornered and decimated, Aidit and his comrades realized that the PKI had to develop a strategy adapted to this hostile situation. Patience was needed. In practice, only one strategy seemed feasible: a close alliance with President Sukarno and his main bloc of support, the national bourgeoisie which was gaining a growing influence on policy making in Jakarta. In such a formidable shadow the Party had the best possibility of maintaining itself, spreading its influence--and, eventually, bringing about a radical transformation of society.

8. See Ruth McVey in "The Enchantment of the Revolution: History and Action in an Indonesian Communist Text" in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979), p.343.

9. The paragraphs in this article about the PKI are primarily based on Rex Mortimer's *Indonesian Communism under Sukarno: Ideology and Politics* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1974) and Olle Tornquist's *Dilemmas of Third World Communism: The Destruction of the PKI in Indonesia* (London: Zed Books, 1984).

The ideology that Aidit formulated was based on an analysis of the particular circumstances in Indonesia. Changes that had to be brought about in society were presented in terms not of the class struggle but of national unity. At this stage of the Revolution--the bourgeois-democratic phase--feudalism and imperialism were the principal enemies; in order to demolish them it was necessary to construct a national front, in which all progressive and middle-of-the-road forces should cooperate. It is clear that Aidit's emphasis on the necessity of such a national front was not merely inspired by theoretical considerations; his identification with the nationalistic concepts of Sukarno and his solidarity makers was as much inspired by considerations of Real-politik. Theory, and praxis: Aidit and his comrades tried to pave the way to a transformation of Indonesian society by grafting Marxist theories upon ideas and values that were deeply rooted in the thinking of the common man: distrust of foreigners; glorification of the State personified in the Great Leader; willingness to support the leader so long as he managed to maintain harmony; the feeling of solidarity against the outside world.

In order to gain respect within such a united national front in support of Sukarno, the PKI had to be made a mass party, and for this purpose the creation of mass organizations was an indispensable tool. These organizations could defend the interests and needs of specific groups within the society--workers, peasants, youth, women, students, scientists, and artists--and thus secure a leading role in societal developments. Within this framework ideological education could be tentatively started, but for the time being the leadership deemed it more important for the members to be taught how to defend group interests rather than how to apply Marxism-Leninism. To give guidance to the common man and woman, to make them aware of their political power, to create national units transcending all ethnic and religious differences--those were Aidit's main aims in setting up these mass organizations. The better the people were organized, the more aware they could be made of their capacity to change social relationships; the politicization and discipline, necessary for the completion of the Revolution, would gradually be brought about by substituting mass participation for mass support. In another shrewd tactical maneuver, the organizations were not made formally responsible to the Party; in that way they had more space for practical maneuvering and they would not deter those who wanted to defend their personal interests without being directly associated with communism.

Ideology and strategy to this end were accepted by the cadres at the Vth PKI-Congress of 1954. Priority was given to the formation of a united national front of workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, and national bourgeoisie. Within this front, the Party was to retain its distinct identity and militancy in its fight against feudalism and imperialism, and against their Indonesian allies, the compradores and the capitalists. The government should be a government of the people; it had to effect democratic rather than socialist reforms. The terms were there; now the content had to be created.

The Party operated from a double concept: a party with mass support and a party with a strong central leadership. This double concept was worked out in a double strategy: formation of a front from above--cooperation with other patriotic, anti-imperialistic, and anti-feudal organizations in order to complete the national democratic revolution; and formation of a front from below--building up a Party through front groups that insisted on democratic liberties so as to expand and win the People's support.

Urban intellectuals and artists form a group that is hard to categorize within an ideology wanting to create new kinds of human relationships and new

forms of consciousness. They have no clear economic basis and, therefore they can not possibly be a specific class. In the PKI's analysis of Indonesian society, intellectuals and artists were classified among the petty bourgeoisie, the group that also included the urban poor, small traders, handicraft workers, fishermen, independent workers. As a group they were, just like workers and peasants, suppressed by feudalism, imperialism, and big bourgeoisie, "Not only the peasants but also the petty bourgeoisie can generally support the revolution; they are good allies of the proletariat," wrote Aidit in 1958. Yet, on the road to a just society, intellectuals and artists remain an unreliable force. "Their weakness is that some of them easily come under the influence of the bourgeois and this is why special attention needs to be devoted to carrying out propaganda and undertaking revolutionary organizational activities among them."¹⁰

Political consciousness can transcend class origins--some of the leading Indonesian Marxists grew up in circles of teachers and journalists, but generally speaking there was a wide gap between the urban intelligentsia, on the one hand, and the masses of peasants and workers, on the other. And in so far as intellectuals and artists felt any sympathy at all for the common man, it was a sympathy of a paternalistic and benevolent kind, cool and superior.

The ideas authoritative intellectuals in the metropolis formulated about culture were largely determined by their ties with the bureaucratic elite--an elite, which as a result of the Dutch Indies educational system, was strongly Western-oriented and very few in number. The Lekra was given the task of neutralizing this group and, when possible, creating new intellectuals who would feel more involved with the fate of the masses. Dharta himself was an excellent example of the new kind of intelligentsia the PKI envisaged: it was not erudition and deep scholarship that counted--Western-oriented knowledge all too often seemed to lead an intellectual to distance himself from social events--but, rather, eloquence and a mastery of the main lines of Communist ideology, combined with a strong emotional involvement with the struggle of the Indonesian People. "The party was, in fact, notably without an 'intellectual' element; its leaders' interest in high learning was the respect of half-educated men--and also the suspicion, for they were determined to provide an alternative schooling to the Western-minded established one."¹¹ A counter-elite, in short.

In the first years of the Aidit leadership there existed a clear tendency in the Party to refrain from a too aggressive involvement in the cultural life of the metropolis. The economic and political problems the reviving Party had to deal with were enormous and demanded so much attention from the still very small cadre that the question of the Arts was pushed to the background. The Institute of People's Art was, as much as possible, left on its own to create a distinct profile--the widely respected presence of Njoto on the Board was a guarantee that the Institute would more or less stay in line with the strategy set out by the Central Committee. For the time being, the presentation of Lekra concepts provoked sufficient irritation among the established taste-makers to warrant the continuation of lively dialogues in which a more definite doctrine could be elaborated. Moreover, the work of authors such as A. S. Dharta, S. Anantaguna, Agam Wispy, Rumambi, Bandaharo Harahap, Boejoeng Saleh, and Samandjaja indicated that a new form of literature was indeed taking form.

10. D. N. Aidit, *Problems of the Indonesian Revolution* (Jakarta: Pamburuan, 1958), p. 53.

11. McVey, "Enchantment of the Revolution," p. 343.

The Congress of 1954 set the PKI, and hence its organizations, on a new course. The "Mukadimah" of the Lekra, therefore, required fundamental revision. This was decided at the first National Conference in Jakarta in 1955, where those present fully agreed that the manifesto was no longer "in accordance with the situation in the field of arts and literature"--a fine example of the pragmatism of the PKI leadership. In 1956, the new "Mukadimah" was made public. The text was considerably shorter than its predecessor, its tone less aggressive, and politics less emphasized. No longer was the Institute of People's Culture meant to be the meeting place of workers and peasants, artists and intellectuals: it was to be the organization for artists and intellectuals alone, the "culture-workers" as they are still called. No grim analysis of societal developments, no clear-cut definition of the concept of People's culture; instead, a short passage: "in these days the Indonesian people comprise all groups in society that fight suppression." The Revolution of 1945 was still presented as the starting point for lifting that suppression, and a repetitive appeal was made to all artists to create in the name of Truth and Reality. In the new "Mukadimah," too, the dialectical relationship between art and science, on the one hand, and society, on the other, remains of crucial importance--all artistic and intellectual forces should now be focussed on contributing to the creation of sovereignty, peace, and democracy, a situation in which a People's culture could freely develop. "Lekra recommends a correct understanding of the realities in their progressive development, and recommends it for scientific methods as well as for literary creation."¹²

In the same year, 1956, Islamic artists, too, tried to create their own profile.¹³ The Lembaga Kesusasteraan Islam (Institute of Islamic Literature) published a manifesto, the "White Message" [Amanat Putih] which was obviously composed against the background of both the Lekra's "Mukadimah" and the Gelanggang's "Surat Kepertjajaan." "The firm basis of our generation is the sacred word. Most authors pride themselves on being followers of a current [*aliran*] that consists of corrupt and immoral men. See how they are groping about in the valley of errors, pronouncing empty words, without proof." The "Amanat Putih" makes it very clear that Islamic artists do not have to look for the Truth--a firm belief in Allah is a solid basis for the creation of good art. "We do not search or wait any longer. We already possess certainty, but we still have to struggle and in each struggle we see the beauty--the art--of life." Another statement of belief, and although the White Message is not a nostalgic retrospect, its tone of conjuration is strongly reminiscent of the "Surat Kepertjajaan." It demonstrates an idealistic attitude which does not offer any concrete rule or suggestion for how art should be created in order to be successful; instead, it prescribes certain mental attitudes as absolute conditions.

The symposium convened the same year by the main organization of Indonesian Muslim students, the PII (Peladjar Islam Indonesia), reached a consensus which adopted the same tone: the artist's spiritual state was as important as his technical expertise. "Islam does not ban the arts, it even stimulates them and

12. For the text of the new Mukadimah, see, for example, *Almanak Seni*, ed. Zaini (Jakarta: Badan Musjawarat Kebudayaan Nasional, 1956), pp. 46-48.

13. The following is based on E. U. Kratz, "Islamic Attitudes toward Modern Indonesian Literature" in *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation, Papers from the Fourth European Colloquium on Malay and Indonesian Studies, Held in Leiden in 1983*, ed. C. D. Grijns and S. O. Robson (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1986), pp. 60-93.

gives them content" according to the first paragraph; the last two paragraphs are particularly significant: "At the least, the art of the Indonesian nation has to endeavor to become an Indonesian art which is in accordance with Islamic art. In order to realize Islamic art those Muslims who desire to create art have to perfect themselves as true Muslim beings."

In intellectual circles in the metropolis these statements probably did not pass unnoticed; yet, as it turned out, they did not play an important role in the subsequent development of Indonesian literature. Discussions about Muslim art remained restricted to the Muslim community. Somehow, Indonesian Muslims have never been able to formulate a workable politics of culture--up to the present day, Muslim intellectuals cannot provide a satisfying answer to the question of why a distinctly Islamic literature has never emerged interesting enough to command respect within leading literary circles in Jakarta and beyond. None of the various other Muslim cultural organizations such as the MASBI (Madjelis Seniman Budajawan Islam), the HSBI (Himpunan Seni Budajawan Islam), and the Lesbumi (Lembaga Seni Budajawan Muslimin Indonesia) was able to unify Muslim artists and overcome the fragmentization and uncertainty within the Muslim community.

Meanwhile, alongside these dialogues about literature and culture, alongside the continuous manifestations of regional cultures, there was a steady stream of novels, short stories, essays, and poetry, published in Indonesian, in newspapers, magazines, journals. Theatre performances. Poetry readings. Seminars about the state of the Arts. In Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya. In Yogyakarta, Bukittinggi, Medan. It all suggests vitality and enthusiasm; but all these activities notwithstanding, there was a general consensus among critics in the metropolis that Indonesian literature was now stagnating after undergoing such interesting development in the days of the Revolution. What were the reasons for this apparent decay in creativity and inventivity? Discussions on this question were becoming fierce and venomous--just like political life at the time.

The accumulating economic and bureaucratic problems eroded the feelings of solidarity and enthusiasm created by the Revolution. Clashes of interests and opinions within the political elite were leading to differentiation and disintegration. One of the last things successive governments were willing to consider was any consistent and effective cultural policy. In the increasingly vehement struggle for political authority in Jakarta artists were marginalized. From an obscure corner, they could only observe how the ideals of the Revolution were fast getting stuck in the mud of corruption, incompetence, and inefficiency. After the sizzling elation of the Revolution, they now came to the painful conclusion that their public was to remain limited and that they were unable to make a substantial contribution to the construction of the new nation. The government's literacy campaigns did little to develop interest in modern Indonesian literature. The deteriorating economic situation made it unattractive for publishers to take too many risks in the field of literature. The National Cultural Council (BMKN), founded to protect the rights and interests of the artists, fell a prey to internal discord, like any other cooperative body. The administration refused to take a more active role in cultivating a taste for a metropolitan literature that may have been an effective instrument in creating a nationalist sense. Even the supply of paper was to become a problem. Embitterment about the evaporation of revolutionary dreams. Disappointment about the minute effect of literature on life. Fear of stultification and silence. Financial problems.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that artists felt attracted by Sukarno's nationalistic fervor, by the PKI's call for a national front: talking

and writing about the creation of a national identity could bring an end to creative depression and isolation.

Membership in the Institute of People's Culture was certainly not the least attractive way out of a spiritual drought. In its local branches and in the journals and magazines it sponsored, the Lekra offered artists plenty of opportunities to vent their anger, pretended or not, about social injustice and personal frustrations; moreover, it was able to provide some financial support, and offered possibilities for publication, travels abroad to all sorts of conferences and congresses, respect and recognition. The Lekra could infuse a new vitality--and foster opportunism. No wonder that some of the highly respected artists in the metropolis, too, followed this track, aware of the fact that developments in political life were favoring the PKI and, therefore, the culture workers of the Lekra.

During the State of Emergency, proclaimed in 1957 to confront the rebellions in Sumatra and Sulawesi, the army intensified its interference in political affairs, in day-to-day administration, and in economic matters. The expulsion of the Dutch and their technological know-how further increased the power of the military who in close cooperation with Sukarno, managed to reorganize political life, replacing the system of parliamentary democracy by one of Guided Democracy that gave the President decisive power. No longer were discussions in the Parliament the central point of authority; now, the speeches and addresses of the President, assisted by the arms of the military were--a process that was accelerated by Sukarno's decision in 1959 to return to the Constitution of 1945.

In order to avoid being totally hemmed in by the army and to retain his position as the Great Leader of the Revolution, Sukarno sought support from the only group that seemed capable of offering some organized counter-balance to the army's power: the PKI. And the PKI was willing to comply with this desire, for both practical and theoretical reasons. The Party needed support to prevent isolation or liquidation, even though this involved considerable emasculation. It also supported Sukarno's claims: the Revolution had, indeed, not yet been finished. Even after the system of Guided Democracy had been substituted for the system of parliamentary democracy in 1959 the Party regarded the solidification of a national front the first prerequisite of success--it was just a matter of redefining terms like "demokrasi," "nasional," "rakyat" into forms that were more in line with the transformation in political life. Protected by the aggressive rhetoric of the Great Leader of the Revolution, agitation could be intensified against anything that smelled like feudalism and imperialism. The membership of the PKI-supported mass organizations kept growing.

A delicate balance of mutual containment between army, President, and PKI was the result--and the Communists operated from the scientific certainty that political power would eventually fall into the hands of the progressive forces within Indonesian society: the present phase of nationalism would necessarily be followed by a socialistic phase in which the essential aims of the Revolution could be realized.

No wonder that, in 1959, the Lekra convened its first National Congress amid great euphoria. The Great Leader of the Revolution himself came to Solo, and in a spirited speech he lavished praise on the culture workers: the Lekra was making an important contribution to the mental revolution of the Indonesian people, and without that mental revolution the political and social revolution that he himself envisaged would be impossible. There was also a note of criticism: some of the paintings in the exhibition that had been organized for the occasion showed very strong Western influences--cubism and abstractism did not

accord with the character of the Indonesian People. The Lekra leadership wholeheartedly agreed.

The leading author of those years, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, delivered an equally laudatory speech: the Lekra had taught him to love the people. "Until 1951 I was of the opinion that art can only be created by the individual, and even more than that, I was of the opinion that modern art was a typical example of creative individualism. At that time I did not yet understand that the individual is just a product, the result of life in its totality, national and international." And Pramoedya was certainly not the only artist who cherished the ideological warmth of the Lekra.

The new secretary-general, Joebaar Ajoeb--A. S. Dharta had been dropped for reasons of personal misconduct--gave a speech, in which the history of the amazing growth of the Lekra and its idea of "art for the People, science for the People" was summarized, the tasks for the near future were set out, the difference between "art for art" and "art for the People" was explained, and, finally, the organizational problems were briefly summed up. The general report seems to have been an adroit reflection of the situation of the Institute of People's Culture: there are problems and there is progress. Worded in clear and accessible language, Ajoeb's report reads like a truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development, an example of those uneasy efforts of Communist ideology to combine the present with the future.¹⁴

At this break point in the development of the Lekra, membership remained a sensitive issue and the secretary-general was relatively frank about it. Some local branches existed only on paper. Other branches were satisfied with enlisting local artists who continued their activities in the old way without making any effort to help concretize People's culture. The number of active members of the Institute was hard to establish--in general, the leadership was very reticent about this throughout its existence--but apparently the Institute was now strong enough to undertake a reorganization. The leadership was divided into seven sections: literature, film, plastic arts, drama, music, dance, and science, and over these sections a central leadership was set up in which 41 artists were given a seat. Most of these 41 were active primarily as authors; their dominating presence in the Lekra explains why the problems of modern literature played such an important role in discussions about the creation of a national culture, even though this emphasis on literature was completely out of proportion: the role literary work could effectively play in spreading the "fire of national culture" throughout Indonesian society was very small. A strange lapse in the Lekra strategy.

It was at this conference that most of the leading slogans were formulated for the years to come: politics is in command; high ideological quality and high artistic quality; popularize and uplift; combine individual creativity with the skills of the masses; combine revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism; go down among the masses. Simple slogans are the best way to reach and teach the masses. A year later the slogans were further formalized into the 1:5:1 formula: 1 basic principle: 5 guidelines for creating activity: 1 method of working.

Euphoria kept growing on every occasion the Lekra convened on a national level. The reports published of the 1960 Plenary Session of the Central Leadership may serve as an illustration.¹⁵

14. See *Laporan Kebudayaan Rakjat* (Jakarta: Bagian Penerbitan Lekra, 1959).

15. See *Laporan Kebudayaan Rakjat* (Jakarta: Bagian Penerbitan Lekra, 1962).

Joebaar Ajoeb, the secretary-general, showed his satisfaction with the political situation; the prospects for a more progressive cultural policy were promising indeed. As for the literary work that Lekra had produced so far, there was reason for optimism here too, although he frankly admitted that the aesthetic ideals of the Lekra were far from realized. The poetry that chose the side of the people was pretty good; prose, essays, and literary criticism, however, had "not yet taken the seat that had been placed ready for them"--they should be more militant, strong, and beautiful [*militan, perkasa, indah*], the characteristics of true "art for the People." In the other fields of the arts, as well, considerable progress was being made: studios, literary circles, and filmclubs had been set up, and regional arts like *wayang*, *ketoprak*, *reog*, and *lenong* had been elaborated with the ideas of the Lekra.

Rivai Apin, the editor of Lekra journal *Zaman Baru*, could proudly claim that this was the only journal that appeared regularly. Anantaguna, in charge of propaganda activities, emphasized the dual function of the Institute in organizing and educating the people. In his view, the agitational success of the Lekra was illustrated by the ban that the armed forces (the main opponents of the PKI), had imposed in several regions on the recitation of Agam Wispy's "Demokrasi" and Bachtiar Siagian's "Batu merah lembah Merapi."

The same euphoria, genuine or not, was to be manifest at the National Conference in Bali in 1962; again praise and jubilation, and the proud statement that since 1959 30 books had been published by the PKI-sponsored publishing house "Pembaruan." Modern Indonesian literature was generally thought to be going through a time of scarcity [*keadaan patjeklik*] so this was quite an impressive performance, particularly considering that very little appeared that metropolitan critics thought worthy of a solid review. Hopes were high that the Lekra was creating a framework that would inevitably lead to a literature of high quality, that is to say: a literature for the common man.

In all, in the early 1960s it seemed as if the Lekra had succeeded in gaining a prominent place in official cultural life. Within the mystique of national unity that Sukarno and his solidarity makers were trying to create through an intense anti-imperialism and a mystique of the spirit of Revolution, the PKI could expand its influence in the united national front. The attitude of progressive nationalism was fast becoming the yardstick for all activities, in the metropolis and therefore in the provinces. The politics of mobilization, organization, and "slogанизation" were intensified.

The members of Lekra were expected to make their own specific contribution to this "culture of agitation" [*kebudajaan perjuangannya*], and that is what they tried to do--not always to the pleasure of the army which took occasional action against too blatant provocations against its power.

generals, it is we that adorned
your chest with medals
wrested from landlords' and usurers' tortuous hands
we now demand of your medals: where is our land?

generals, it is we that adorned
your chest with medals
out of the sweat of a seven-hour that became a ten-hour workday
we now demand of your medals: where is our pay?

generals, one after another we fell
gun in hand, against the Dutch

we now demand of your medals:
Irian?

generals, certainly it is not you
who will give land, pay and Irian
what we want is: let us build one front
and above all: give us freedom to speak.¹⁶

This poem, written in 1959 by Agam Wispy, shows how the creativity of the Lekra was evolving as it gained authority as an organization. The message is clear and unambiguous. It is written from the perspective of "us," the masses. The image is of a struggle against imperialism and feudalism, and against repression in general. The Indonesian of the original is simple, the words are organized in a clear rhythm. It is a provocative poem, inviting public recitation. It is propaganda poetry, and as such it is a excellent manifestation of the "*kebudajaan perjuang*an" that supported the PKI in its efforts to challenge the army's authority and gain control over the national front. "Demokrasi," written in the wake of the ban on the PKI's newspaper *Harian Rakjat* in 1959, was recited at demonstrations and rallies--until it was banned by several regional military commanders. In the eyes of the Lekra it was a successful poem: it presents the world from a correct perspective, the message is constructed in a simple and accessible form of repetitive phrases and sentences, it breathes the spirit of struggle, and it had the correct effect on the people.

To be succesful meant to be effective: the literary doctrine that the Lekra developed in the fifties was of a strongly utilitarian character. Art was primarily seen as a weapon in the revolutionary struggle and, just as in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, theoretization was focussed on the description of the socio-economic context in which a work of art was created and perceived rather than on an analysis of the formal features of a work of art--discussions of matters of form like genres, plots, rhythm, rhyme were evaded as much as possible.

"The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being, that determines their consciousness At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production or--what is but the legal expression for the same thing--with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces their relations turn into their fetters. Then begins the epoch of social revolution"

In the discussions inspired by the writings of Marx and Engels, this passage in the preface to the "Critique of Political Economy" has often been used as the starting point for an analysis of the relationship between base and super-structure, between social being and consciousness, between socio-economic

16. djenderal, telah kami pasang/ bintang2 didada kalian/ dari redjam tuantanah dan lintah/ kami tuntutan bintangmu: mana tanah?// djenderal, telah kami pasang/ bintang2 didada kalian/ dari keringat tudjuh djadi sepuluh djam/ kami tuntutan bintangmu: mana upah?!// djenderal, telah gugur kami satu-satu/ melawan belanda dan bedil ditangan/ kami tuntutan bintangmu/ mana Irian?!// djenderal, tentu bukan kalian/ pemberi tanah, upah dan Irian/ jang kami mau: kita tegak satu barisan/ maka diatas segala: bebaskan kami bitjara! This English translation, by Bintang Suradi, can be most easily found in Burton Raffel, *The Development of Modern Indonesian Poetry* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1967), p. 150.

circumstances and manifestations of culture. Sophisticated thinkers like Raymond Williams have shown that Marxist terms like "reflection," "determine," and "productive forces" contain a distinct vagueness that easily leads to ambiguity when more precise questions are posed as to how the basis determines the superstructure, how the arts reflect the real world, what exactly the real world is, what the role of an individual is in the unfolding of the objective laws of history, and, most importantly: to what degree are artistic forms determined by social relationships and to what degree are they determined to change those relationships? Mediation, typification, homology are some of the concepts that have been developed to account for this undeniable dialectic, but generally speaking Communist parties have always had an uneasy attitude toward literature--and the PKI was certainly no exception to that rule.

To a certain extent, the vagueness of the doctrine that Lekra developed was intentional. Literature was part of the superstructure, and as such it should concur with concrete developments in society, that is: with the context in which it had to function. Vagueness and ambiguity allowed for easy maneuvering in a constantly changing situation; it is this very versatility which makes a careful analysis of the literary doctrine of the Institute of People's Culture a rather useless endeavor--there could hardly be more than a series of variations on a single theme, a dry enumeration of opinions and prescriptions, in which the call for a radical transformation of society is constantly repeated in different words.

No matter how vague and tentative, no matter how varied, the kernel of socialist realism emerged again and again in the theoretical remarks of Lekra-ists: literature is to be the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development, combining the most matter-of-fact, everyday reality with the most heroic prospects: it was assumed that literature should, somehow, reflect social circumstances, while, on the other hand, the author should contribute to the necessary transformation of society. To combine present and future, realism and idealism, observation and imagination, description and propaganda is a very awkward task. It took the Institute of People's Culture some years to domesticate this central point in a manner that made the literary products of its doctrine easily recognizable to both its supporters and its opponents--dissatisfaction about the creative results, however, remained.

For those readers who are well-versed in Marxist literary theories, it is not so hard to see that the main features of the Lekra doctrine closely parallel the basic characteristics of the dominant literary doctrine in the Soviet Union and China; articles by Lekra-ists abound with echoes from European concepts. Those echoes make it the more striking to realize that the heated discussions in Marxist circles elsewhere--the polemics about realism and mass culture, the rise of the Prolet-kul't, the debates about the "Dream of the Red Chamber"--are passed over in almost complete silence. Lack of intellectual rigor is certainly part of the explanation; the famous discussions between Brecht and Lukacs, Zdanov and Lunacharsky, Li Hsi-Fan and Yu P'ing-Po were based on a sensitivity for literary traditions and theorizing which Lekra-ists neither possessed nor understood. The works that form part of the canon of Soviet and Chinese socialist realism--Mayakovsky, Gorky, Polevoi, Lu Hsun--were presented as standards of excellence, next to Steinbeck, Shakespeare, and Multatuli, but who really read the work of these authors and who would take the trouble to study them carefully?

Apart from shrewd opportunism and blatant ignorance, indifference was also involved: what use could all these foreign discussions and problems have for the concrete Indonesian situation? What good could emphatic references to foreign theories do for the construction of a national culture? There was not

yet much reason for elaborate theorizing, anyway: it would be hard to find a literary work that was worth such honor.

The primary genres in which the Lekra authors tried to implement a hazy form of socialist realism were the short story and the poem, by far the most popular forms of modern Indonesian literature after the days of the Revolution. In the beginning, experiments were awkward and unconvincing. In an apparent effort to overcome this uncertainty, the slogan "combine revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism," accepted by the National Conference in 1959, resulted in a division of labor: short stories were primarily to focus on descriptive realism, poetry on rhetorical propaganda.

Most of the short stories published between 1950 and 1965 are not very adventurous, to say the least. Written in simple and straightforward language, they could easily be reduced to a single masterplot: a hero is faced with a crisis due to concrete socio-economic problems, and after a shorter or longer period of hardship he succeeds in overcoming this crisis. These stories present themselves as truthful pictures of the contemporary life and thinking of lower class people in a factory, in a town, in the countryside. To this realism a "revolutionary" element is added: everything turns out for the good, the hero acquires a deep insight and decides to change the world. The simple language in which the story is presented facilitate correct understanding: the reader is expected to take the hero's decision as an admirable example and change the world. As for the time in which these stories are set, Lekraists tended to focus on contemporary Indonesia rather than on the time of the physical Revolution against the Dutch; in contrast with other Indonesian authors who tended to mythologize the four years of hide-and-seek as a time of heroic glory, the socialist realists saw little reason for such glorification. It had been a bourgeois Revolution from which those who had tried to implement a radical transformation of society had been excluded after Madiun; the events surrounding Madiun were occasionally chosen as subject matter for a number of stories, but on the whole it appeared more useful to focus the readers' attention on the present-day struggle of peasants, workers, and soldiers than on a glory that never was.

While Lekra prose was realistic, Lekra poetry increasingly became the reverse: propaganda; incantational, full of exaggerations, exorcizing counter-revolutionary elements. A simple and rhythmical language, easy to recite, easy to memorize, easy to sing and shout--and thus to make the words come true.

Realistic short stories that are short on interpretative surprises and stylistic somersaults and a poetry of a repetitive structure, full of slogans and exhortations: a curtain of hollowness and pathos hangs around the literary experiment as a whole. Too much form, too little content, to put it in a phrase that would have annoyed the Lekraists. It seems justified to wonder to what extent their best work could be seen as a creative alternative to the work of those who refused to accept Lekra's concepts as their standard.¹⁷

17. Interestingly enough, no novel was published by any of the Lekraists in the period 1950-1965. Their short stories are numerous though most are not very successful, as the Lekra leadership itself was very willing to admit. There are, of course, some exceptions. Samandjaja's "Achmadi" (in the Lekra anthology *Nasi dan Melati serta Merdeka dan Tanah* [Surabaya: Lekra, 1956]) is a jewel, and so are some of the later stories of T. Iskandar AS and Zubir AA. In retrospect, the anthology of short stories that was published in 1965, *Jang tak terpadamkan* (Jakarta: Pamburuan, 1965), reads like a summary of Lekra's potential--promising, one would say, or impressive. The same holds for the anthology

The heirs of Chairil Anwar were looking to the West for inspiration and examples. They imitated, translated, quoted Van Ammers-Kuhler, Elsschot, Perk, Marsman, Rilke, Eliot, Steinbeck, Camus--it is a strange genealogy without many Indonesian names. And it comes together in a group of artists who regarded their work as the expression of individual experiences and tastes, based on a corpus of texts that, in their view, had an eternal and universal value.

Although they would probably not readily admit it, a considerable part of the genealogy of the Lekra leaders is similar to that of Chairil's heirs, with whom the Institute struggled for authority over literary life in the metropolis. Lekraists, too, were primarily urban intellectuals for whom the countryside was not very attractive. Their pens and typewriters, too, struggled with the poetry of Chairil and Eliot and the prose of Steinbeck and Camus. All too often, they wrote not for the People but about the People, and their work remained remote from the broad masses of Indonesia: it was applauded by the already convinced, but remained unread by the masses. It could be claimed that Lekra art was created in the interests of the workers, peasants, and soldiers but that seems an empty claim. Who conceived of modern Indonesian literature as a separate discourse, except those who had received a Western education? Who produced and read novels, short stories, and poetry from that perspective, except members of the urban bourgeoisie of which, in Aidit's view, most Lekra writers themselves formed part? Initially, Lekra's endeavors were restricted to a small circuit of intellectuals not fully trusted by the Communist Party: they preferred living in urban areas among their fellows rather than intermingling with the toiling masses; and they preferred having dialogues and discussions with fellow-authors to exchanging views with peasants and workers. Lekra's members remained susceptible to the temptations of imperialism and feudalism.

One line should, however, be added to the Lekra genealogy: socialist realism as developed in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. And that was the line that inspired the Institute to make an effort to break away from authoritative traditions and create a distinct brand of literature. The leadership fully realized that time was needed to form a group of artists with the correct socio-political awareness for a correct understanding of what good literature was to be: the artist should not try to give expression to his personal experience and tastes but to those of workers, peasants, and soldiers, the People in short. Instead of being obsessed by the perfect form of universal beauty, he should try to provide a truthful and concrete picture of Indonesian reality in its revolutionary development. By way of a simple form of Indonesian, which the People could easily understand.

Now, for the majority of the People, Indonesian was a second language that was primarily associated with bureaucracy, administration, officialdom, central authority, in short: with the very things that all too often threatened the peace of daily life. So far as education had inculcated the habit of reading among them, people felt more attracted to local newspapers, the yellow press, penny dreadfuls, and religious texts than to texts surrounded by an aura of high culture, merely because they came from the metropolis and were written in stylized Indonesian. What exactly makes an Indonesian work "simple" and "easily understandable"? What made the Lekra think that it could cross those barriers and make a substantial contribution to the construction of the "fortress of a national-democratic culture" by popularizing its special kind of modern Indonesian literature? What exactly did words like "the People" and "the masses"

of poetry that was published in the same year, *Kepada Partai* (Jakarta: Pamburuan, 1965). In literary terms, an interesting experiment indeed.

refer to except to one another? What did the peasant of Java have in common with the fisherman in Pare-Pare and the trader in Bandar Aceh? What did "national-democratic culture" designate? Those are basic questions; for a decade they remained hidden behind a screen of catchy slogans before concrete plans were set out to "go down" [*turun kebawah*] so as to transform the uneasy narcissism of Lekra writers into a more active involvement. Sharing life with the common man was the most effective way of finding out how personal inner needs could best be made subservient to communal needs, and therefore artists were stimulated to live and travel among the People in the countryside, the raw material of any work of art, the best place to observe and analyze all men, all classes, all the patterns of life and struggle. This was the best way to make sure that the correct literature was created: literature about the People and for the People.

In the same vein, efforts were made to turn manifestations of traditional culture like *ludruk*, *lenong*, and *reog* into instruments for spreading political ideas. How far such efforts bore fruit is hard to determine; the few reliable accounts of eye-witnesses suggest that there was probably no troupe, no group that simply parroted political propaganda.¹⁸ A very attractive form of such regional arts was, of course, the *wayang*, by far the most popular form of art in Central and East Java, the areas where the PKI enjoyed great sympathy. Lekraists, however, disagreed regarding its usefulness. Had the shadow play with its stories of loyalty, obedience, and hierarchy not always been used by the feudal lords as a tool to suppress the people? Was it not a manifestation of a feudal and hence reprehensible world-view that had held the people in its grip for centuries? At every Lekra meeting, on the national level again, the role of the shadow play was discussed: Why not try to create completely new stories? Why not change the language of the shadow play from Javanese to Indonesian? Why not try to suppress it?

As a whole, regional arts posed a problem the Lekra doctrine found hard to solve in its search for a National Identity. Lekra-influenced periodicals like *Zaman Baru*, *Bintang Timur*, and *Harian Rakjat* paid ample attention to local traditions. Attempts were made to bring regional artists into line with the Party's dreams of a new society. There were discussions of how elements of regional traditions could be inserted into National Culture. The idea of a national Indonesian culture, no matter how vague and ambiguous, remained the unquestioned starting point of the endeavors of the Institute of People's Culture: unity should dominate over diversity, local traditions should be approached from the perspective of national traditions and not the other way around.

In the field of literature--Lekra's dominant field of concern--this emphasis on a national Indonesian culture meant that no serious effort was made to challenge the authority of Indonesian as the language of expression. So far as regional literary forms were brought into the mainstream of national culture at all, they were transformed into Indonesian, and the poems of Anantaguna and Ismail Hamid, and the drama of Joebar Ajoeb may be read as interesting experiments in how local literary traditions can be effectively "nationalized." Yet all too often, Lekra work reminds the reader of the realism of Balai Poestaka and Poedjangga Baroe, the Dutch-inspired literary movements at the end of the colonial period, and of the romanticism of Chairil--as though its authors

18. See, for instance, J. Peacock, *Rites of Modernization: Symbolic and Social Aspects of Indonesian Proletarian Drama 1966* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

addressed less the common man in the countryside than their literary predecessors in the metropolis. The creative rigor to break with the past and to set up a new tradition by way of deathless images needed time to develop--and in retrospect one can wonder how far it developed, if at all.

One way to assure the validity of a literary doctrine is to show that literary works are created that command the respect even of non-sympathizers. Another way is to prove that the doctrine already had a tradition of its own.

A tradition presupposes the determination of sources, situated somewhere in the past, but, then, Indonesia's past was not very interesting for Lekraists. Fragmentized as the archipelago had always been, there was nothing like a "national history," and whatever was left over of the past told more about the feudal lords than about the People. A tradition which is suitable to the needs and questions of the time can always be constructed--the Lekra focussed its attention on the Malay literature, which had been published mainly in Batavia after the beginning of the present century. In particular Pramoedya Ananta Toer should be given credit for trying to provide Indonesian nationalism with a new historical dimension; under his leadership, literary work was dug up that had been almost completely suppressed by the authority of Balai Poestaka and Poedjangga Baroe. The work of authors like Tirto Adisurjo, Pangemanann, Mas Marco, and Thio Tjin Boen showed that resistance to suppression and intimidation, revolt against injustice and cruelty had already found literary expression as early as at the beginning of this century. Nationalism could draw inspiration from the endeavors of these people and Indonesian authors should take their work as an example. Considering Pramoedya's creativity in this field, it is very strange that not he but Bakri Siregar was given the opportunity to publish a history of modern Indonesian literature.¹⁹ In many respects it is a disappointing book, basically for the same reason so much of Lekra literature was disappointing: it remains too much involved in a discussion with the Universal Humanists, instead of silencing opponents by opening up an attractive, new road to literature.

As suggested above, PKI theorists had problems in locating intellectuals and, as a consequence, they did not know exactly how to handle them. Too harsh attempts to impose PKI demands on the artists gave rise to tensions and conflicts, within and without the Institute of People's Culture. Even Lekra artists, insofar as they were creative at all, did not like to be told in too much detail what and how they had to write--there was still the romantic mystique of the lonely artist, struggling with his subjective feelings, suffering from his personal reminiscences. Did not, in the spirit of Chairil, a certain amount of fickleness suit every artist?

Chairil's heritage was strong--not all intellectuals in the metropolis were willing to identify actively with the great concepts of Sukarno's nationalism, and not all artists were willing to support Lekra's idea that politics should be in command in the creation of art. The official cultural policy that was formulated again and again in terms of the unfinished Revolution must have made many an author shudder: as if a national culture could be conjured up by a series of addresses and essays. A number of artists preferred to keep aloof from the whirlwind, and refused to be carried along in the nationalistic propaganda and agitation which Sukarno and his solidarity-makers imposed upon the Indonesian people.

19. Bakri Siregar, *Sedjarah sastra Indonesia modern* (Jakarta: Akademi Sastera dan Bahasa "Multatuli," 1964).

To go abroad was one way out. At the beginning of the sixties Takdir Alisjahbana disappeared, and so did Balfas and Idrus--their work was banned and, therefore, published in Malaysia, at the time Indonesia's arch-enemy. Some of the authors who were getting depressed by the ideological fervor at home were relieved that they, too, could leave. Subagio Sastrowardojo, for instance, and Rendra.

Another alternative was to stay at home, in Jakarta, or in the provinces, and be calm and silent, not being drawn into those tiring discussions about National Identity, National Culture, People's Culture, and the responsibility of the artist. It was still possible to have one's work published, by some magazine or journal, by some local publishing house. Literary work in Indonesian continued to be published in the regions, hardly noticed by literary circles in Jakarta and, therefore, not appreciated.

A third possibility was to propagate a third road for Indonesian literature--to preach and practice regionalism as an alternative to both Universal Humanism and Socialist Realism. The works of Ajip Rosidi and Nugroho Notosusanto are good examples of efforts to infuse regional elements into the mainstream of modern Indonesian literature. For the time being, however, they were only regarded with paternalistic benevolence; they lacked the authority to gain control over the literary scene in the metropolis.

The continuous Revolution as preached by Sukarno is a good illustration of the dangers that threaten a massive mobilization which is not sufficiently thought out. The vehemence of the denunciations of imperialism and feudalism, textbook thinking and elitism demonstrated how strongly the presence of the West and the power of paternalism were still resented in Jakarta. Nationalistic propaganda aimed at awakening the masses, looking for unity and synthesis by way of slogans and watchwords. Mass-meetings. Public declarations of loyalty to the Great Leader and the Ideals of the Revolution. Calls for the destruction of imperialism and its decadent *ngak-ngik-ngok* culture. As a whole, these activities increasingly turned into an aim in themselves, serving to contain competitive forces in Jakarta rather than create the cognitive map that the Indonesian population so badly needed in order to know how to tackle the numerous problems of these times of crisis and hardship. It appeared that, in spite of all their rhetoric suggesting otherwise, metropolitan leaders were unable--or unwilling--to mobilize the power needed for an effective government, for a solution to the fear of stultification, for an adequate solution of the country's economic problems. Romanticism persisted, but the unselfish idealism that had been so strong in the years of the physical Revolution was being eroded--ideas were no longer used to describe reality and to solve problems but, rather, to conjure unattainable dreams and to manipulate life in the metropolis.

This can be said of Sukarno and his companions; it can also be said of the Lekra: the Institute, too, did not evade the dangers of emptiness. The slogans it developed after 1959 were numerous and clear--"go down," "spread and heighten," "politics is in command," "art for the people," "literature of agitation" are battle-cries that may have increased the political awareness of peasants and workers, but they did not offer clear directions as to how socio-political changes could be realized. It was obvious that in the case of artists, too, being a revolutionary meant speaking revolutionary rather than acting revolutionary. Ideology did not run parallel with the facts of daily life. Feudal relationships were too ingrained in the mainly agrarian population. The economy was deteriorating. And the army was on guard.

In the years after 1959 confusion grew. A wild variety of interests, ideals, dreams, and plans collided with one another and with reality. It was a period

during which Sukarno and the army were entangled in a complicated and opaque power play to preserve a delicate balance. Sukarno needed the grassroots support the Communists could offer him, and he made politics an all-pervasive element of everyday life. In the tense atmosphere of Jakarta everybody was expected to express support for the National Front which the Great Leader was trying to forge between Nationalists, Muslims, and Communists. Those who, for whatever reason, refused to fling themselves into the ideological maelstrom, and those who had the courage to give public vent to their worries about the deteriorating economic situation ran the risk of being dubbed accomplices of imperialism and feudalism and were, therefore, treated as enemies of the Revolution.

Essentially, the discussions that occupied the intelligentsia in the metropolis and beyond could be reduced to the questions everybody in any community is confronted with sooner or later: to what extent do I have any responsibility for the community I am part of, to what extent am I willing to make a contribution to the common well-being, and to what extent am I a free individual to follow my own desires, my inner voice? To what extent, indeed, should an artist be forced to make his talents subservient to the Revolution, to the construction of a national culture, a People's culture? It can not be doubted that most Jakartans took it for granted that they did have a task to fulfill in their newly created nation--it was rather the question of how this could be achieved which led to a division of minds. Were Sukarno and the Lekra entitled to impose a distinct consciousness, or should Western-educated intellectuals still be permitted to set the tone? Should a dialogue be maintained at all costs? Could certain forms of art be rejected even though they were created with a pure heart and a clear conscience? Could scholars be expected to prefer certain sorts of research over others in the name of the state's well-being, the people's benefit?

And why were still relatively few intellectuals attracted to the PKI and the Lekra? Apparently, the Party was getting uneasy about this. From the VIth Congress in 1959 onwards all sorts of efforts were undertaken to tackle the problem, which was summarized in a special Party report of Jusuf Adjitorop: little support could be expected from those who had received their basic education before 1945 and the Party should, therefore, try more actively to build up a new intelligentsia among those who had grown up after 1945.²⁰ Literacy campaigns were intensified. Special academies, universities, and teachers' training institutes were established. In 1962 the Himpunan Sarjana Indonesia was founded, an organization of Indonesian scholars which, operating separately from the Lekra, managed to make its presence felt in intellectual life. In 1963 a Four-Year Plan on Culture, Ideology, and Organization was initiated that aimed at a general education and an ideological training of old and new cadres who could assist in the implementation of the Party's dream of a national democratic culture.

In the debates of these years, the name of Chairil Anwar continued to emerge. For the Universal Humanists, he had become a culture hero, a symbol of the creative seeker for freedom with an absolute dedication to the art of poetry. He had shown that an artist may have all sorts of social obligations but that in his art he is primarily responsible to his personal conscience. His example of artistic integrity deserved emulation. For the Lekra, Chairil had become the symbol of the a-political individualist. He may have played an important role during the Revolution because of his anti-fascist, subversive

20. See Jusuf Adjitorop, *Madjulah inteligenasia Indonesian berkerumun disekitar Manipol* (Jakarta: Pamburuan, 1962).

attitude, but in this time of national reconstruction his work should be dismissed as reactionary and immoral. An Indonesian artist should work in the interest of the Indonesian People and not for the satisfaction of his personal interests. He should be willing to make his work subservient to the accomplishment of the social revolution.

Two philosophies, equally consistent in themselves, equally exclusive. Once Lekra considered its position in metropolitan circles strong enough to start a great offensive, there was no place for the Universal Humanists in the unfinished Revolution of Sukarno: those artists, those intellectuals who refused to bow for Nationalism should be silenced or, at least, neutralized.

The first target of the concerted attacks was Muslim art. In PKI-controlled journals the prominent Muslim leader Hamka was accused of plagiarism: it was suddenly "discovered" that his best-selling novel *Tenggelamnya kapal van der Wijf* was an imitation of an Egyptian novel, a fact that had never been acknowledged as such by Hamka.²¹ Involved here, claimed the Lekra, was not so much a literary problem as a moral one: how honest were the leaders of our society these days? Should not Hamka's evasiveness be regarded as the basic characteristic of the elite as a whole? Hamka was defended by some, attacked by others. It was one of those polemics in which neither side could claim a clear victory. It showed, at least, that Muslims were less able to defend their leaders through a dialogue than through isolation. The intellectual world was disintegrating. The atmosphere was getting sour. 1962.

Then it was the turn for the Universal Humanists. They had already been accused of spreading reactionary concepts of literature through their mouthpiece, the literary monthly *Sastra*. "We do not want to be tied to a party or the program of a cultural institute," Jassin defended his vision in 1962 in the first issue of *Sastra*: "an artist should have the freedom to define his position on the basis of common sense in which the concept of humanity is taken in its broadest meaning. Art serves the truth, and the truth may be found on the side of the strong and it may be found on the side of the weak. Truth is autonomous." And: "Culture as a fact in human life has universal tendencies, that is, universal in the sense that culture is not just for one nation, but for all nations. And apart from that, not only for one generation but for all generations." Such phrases were manifestations of an alarming desire to separate art from society. In this vision, art was not conceived as an instrument to reconstruct Indonesian society but as something that stood in its own right. It was a negation of the Revolution. Very reprehensible. Very dangerous.

The great outburst took place when the heirs of Chairil Anwar were emboldened to publish a "Cultural Manifesto" [Manifes Kebudayaan--Manikebu] in 1963. In Jakarta, of course.

We, Indonesian artists and intellectuals, hereby present a cultural Manifesto declaring our principles and ideals and our policy with respect to the National Culture. For us culture is the constant effort to bring the conditions of human existence to perfection. We do not regard any one sector of culture as superior to the others. All sectors work together to achieve this culture to the best of their ability. In this realization of a National Culture we strive to be truly and purely creative by way of our contribution

21. This novel, by the Egyptian novelist Mustafa Luthfi, was itself an adaptation of a French novel, *Sous les tilleuls* by Alphonse Karr--a fine example of a literary genealogy.

to the struggle to defend and foster our dignity as Indonesians in the community of nations. The Pantja Sila is the philosophical basis of our culture.²²

The text looks rather innocent; the venom lies hidden in the explanatory supplement in which the signatories try to domesticate Sukarno's ideology of the Pantja Sila in a shrewd defense of the independence of art. The last sentence reads: "It is our conviction that the socialist society of the Pantja Sila for which we are fighting in a revolutionary-cultural manner is a historical necessity which can not be stopped by anybody, least of all by ourselves." This reads ironically against the formulations in the manifesto, where it is, for example, stated: "We can draw the conclusion that a political concept of aesthetics which summarizes that politics is primary and aesthetics secondary is a utopia seen from the point of culture and art. If that concept were applied in an honest manner, it would give rise only to feelings of disappointment, and if the concept is applied in an dishonest manner, it would be a trick of ambitious politicians."

No matter how ambivalent in its formulations, the intent of the Cultural Manifesto is clear: the basic Lekra concept, "politics is in command," was squarely rejected. The Manifesto was a provocation. It was a challenge in the struggle for authority over the literary world.

The Manifesto received numerous declarations of support and sympathy from all corners of the archipelago; apparently they puzzled the Lekra. Had the Institute overplayed its hand? Had it been carried away by its own euphoria? The leadership was divided about which strategy it should follow; four months passed before the counter-attack was launched and the heirs of Chairil were accused of being reactionary imperialists.

Contra-revolutionaries. Subversives. And when Jassin, Sukito, and their fellow signatories made public their plans to organize a writers' conference as a follow-up to their public call for creative freedom, the reaction was furious. The Lekra felt cornered; as though all the gains it had made so far suddenly evaporated.

In spite of fierce accusations of reactionism and contra-revolutionarism, the Manifesto's Conference (Konferensi Karyawan Pengarang Indonesia) did take place in March 1964, not in the least thanks to the sympathy and assistance of General Nasution, chief of staff of the armed forces. Attendance was impressive, the organization went smoothly, and of course the signatories of the Manifesto used to the full the many declarations of sympathy. They could claim that they were not speaking just for themselves but for a large group of intellectuals and artists who were worried about the growing intolerance in the metropolis. Their opponents better admit that they did not yet have literature under their control.

Attacks from nationalist and Communist quarters were intensified; the army should not interfere in cultural matters, and Jassin and his friends could no longer say that they wanted to remain outside politics. By gaining such explicit

22. The original text was published in the literary journal *Sastra*, see A. Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature*, part II (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1979), p. 35. A detailed description of events around the publication and subsequent reactions can be found in Keith Foulcher's "A Survey of Events Surrounding 'Manikebu.' The Struggle for Cultural and Intellectual Freedom in Indonesian Literature" (*Bijdragen Kon. Instituut Taal-, Land- en volkenkunde* 125, pt. 4 [1969], pp. 429-65) and in Ismail's *Pertumbuhan, perkembangan dan kejatuhan Lekra*.

support from the army, they had to admit that they, too, had entered the political arena. They were contradicting their own apolitical ideal, and because they had chosen the wrong side they could no longer claim to be marginal and harmless. They were trying to derail the Revolution. Once again the PKI saw its fears concerning the intelligentsia confirmed: it was an unreliable group, always ready to take sides with the enemies of the National Revolution. The fierceness of the PKI attack betrayed uncertainty, anxiety.

The offensive launched at the beginning of 1964 against the Manikebuists was not an isolated event. As with all PKI-backed organizations, Lekra's campaigns tended to surge and subside in accordance with the rhythm of the movement toward socialism as directed by the Party's Central Committee. Lekra's own foundation in 1950 was a prelude to the internal coup in the Party by Aidit, Lukman, and Njoto. Its first National Conference in 1955 and the reformulation of the "Mukadimah" followed on the successful Vth Congress of the Party, where the Aidit-line had been accepted by the cadre. Its first National Congress in 1959 was followed by the VI Party Congress, which in an equal euphoria hammered at the need of anti-imperialism and self-reliance.

The unilateral actions in the countryside and the offensive against Universal Humanism could be interpreted as manifestations of the new militant line the Party had decided to take at the end of 1963, after the lifting of most of the emergency measures taken in 1957 to suppress the regional revolts in Sumatra and Sulawesi. The revised Party line was based on a new concept of the distribution of power, which divided all political forces into two camps: social groups that represent the interests of the People (pro-People) and groups that represent the interests of the People's enemies (anti-People). The PKI planned to gain access to power through an alliance with the first camp; the anti-People elements were to be eradicated as soon as possible. It was a new phase in its strategy, tying the Party's fate more closely than ever to the President and alienating it further from the army.

The unilateral actions in the countryside were the first consistent attempts on a wide scale to appropriate political power without the protection of the President. Small peasants were encouraged to attack land-lordism, in order to implement the Agrarian Laws. The campaigns were not a great success, mainly because of the forceful opposition from the army and the Muslims. It was obvious that the Party had made a miscalculation: it put both itself and Sukarno in a difficult position--and it showed that it had still a long way to go.

Pressed by his political advisors, in May 1964 Sukarno decided to ban the Cultural Manifesto because of its hesitant attitude towards the wisdom of the President, its questioning of the State's ideology, and the way it incited artists and intellectuals to leave the rails of the Revolution--the President's own Political Manifesto should be sufficient. The signatories of the Manifesto were to serve as scapegoats, as a warning for all people who dared question the validity of the Great Leader's ideology or, to put it differently, for all people who were reluctant to forgo their Western education.

This action, of course, was in strict accordance with the PKI's intentions, which had been formulated in a little handbook for members of the Party: "It can not be denied that any destruction of imperialism in the field of economics and politics, which is not accompanied by its destruction in the field of culture, is like closing the front-door and leaving the back-door open for thieves to enter."²³

23. *Tesis 45 tahun PKI* (Jakarta: Pembaruan, 1965), p. 12.

At the end of August 1964 the PKI organized its own conference in Jakarta, the "Conference of Revolutionary Literature and Art" (Konferensi Sastra dan Seni Revolusioner). Sukarno received the participants in the presidential palace where he gave an inspiring speech ("Comrades you have all my sympathy!"), and for the first time since the Lekra's foundation, Chairman Aidit made public statements about literature.²⁴ Probably the most important message in these speeches was that National art should be substituted for People's art. Aidit defined National art as: "the art that is born from the traditions of revolutionary Patriotism of the Indonesian People, reflecting the traditions and customs of the nation itself, having national themes and depicting the revolutionary national aspirations of the Indonesian People." He praised the Lekra for its success in stopping the downfall of the ideals of the Revolution over the past fourteen years; its concepts had been proven to be the correct ones. The Chairman emphasized that this Conference was primarily a political event--politics being the essence of literature--and he repeated several times that every self-respecting author should aim at serving and teaching [*mengabdikan mendidik*] the masses. The process of integrating the arts with the masses and with the revolutionary movement needed Lekra's guidance--and in this connection Aidit made possibly his most striking statement: art did not need to aim directly at the masses but rather at the cadres who, as a reflection of the masses' desires, would transmit their newly acquired knowledge further downward.

The role of Aidit in literary developments is a curious one. He had been one of the founders of the Lekra but had left the arts to the care of his close comrade Njoto, the erudite and sharp-witted editor of the PKI daily, *Harian Rakjat*. The only indication of the chairman's interest in literature were the poems that occasionally appeared under his name in progressive newspapers and journals and in Lekra anthologies. Not until the Central Committee had decided to start an intensive drive for more practical power, did the Chairman choose to emerge as the expert who, in an apparent imitation of Mao Dze Tung, gave directives to the men and women of letters. Fourteen years had passed since the Lekra's foundation: this long silence alone indicates how marginal the literary endeavor was in the PKI strategy as a whole.²⁵ Now the time had apparently come to get literary life more under control and to introduce a truly Party literature, but even when the helmsman thus eventually spoke out, not all Lekraists were equally happy with this direct interference. It all sounded too imposing, too prescriptive; the Party should refrain from strangling artistic creativity and focus its criticism on the others.

Lekra's attacks on its opponents were fierce indeed: anyone who is not for us, is against us. The logic was inevitable, but the ammunition it used was at times shamelessly rude and rather out of proportion. "Modern Indonesian litera-

24. See D. N. Aidit, *Dengan sastra dan seni yang berkepribadian nasional mengabdikan buruh, tani dan pradjurit* (Jakarta: Pembaruan, 1964). The titles of his speeches alone indicate their content: "History of the integration of revolutionary literature and art with the masses of the working People," "With a literature and an art that have a national identity serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, completing the national-democratic revolution in the direction of socialism," "Integration of authors and artists with the working People is an absolute condition in the implementation of the correct political line by giving it a high artistic form."

25. This marginality is indicated by the scarcity of information about the Institute of People's Culture in the books on the Communist Party of Indonesia by authoritative scholars like Mortimer and Hindley.

ture" was not important, not in the metropolis, not in Indonesia. But then, to have one crack in the shell could be the end of the egg of unity: a small group of subversives within the metropolitan culture could really have disruptive effects on the unity and solidarity of the Indonesian nation as a whole.

As already stated above, the collision was one between two incompatible ideologies--yet another manifestation of the dialogues that were raging in Jakarta for control over formulation and implementation of the Republic's cultural policy. On one level it was a violent struggle for authority over literary and intellectual discourse. On another level, it was a chaotic entanglement of jealousies and antipathies, of opportunism and hunger for power, of ideals and optimism.

For Jassin--he lost his position at the Universitas Indonesia--it must have been an unpleasant time, as it was for his fellow signatories--public disgrace, stones thrown at their windows, threatening letters. The "Manikebu-affair" demonstrated how tense the situation was in those days. Western culture was scoffed at. USIS, Sticusa, and the Peace Corps were closed down. Text-book thinking was sharply condemned. State-supported indoctrination campaigns were intensified. The publications of Manikebuists and their confessed supporters were banned. Some of their books were burnt in public bonfires, but most of them were just hidden away, to await better days. Ideological campaigns were superficial; they were obtrusively present in daily life, often annoying, but not really dangerous. One of the leaders of the Manikebuists, then a young student, was to write later:

The Cultural Manifesto derived its intellectual tradition from Chairil Anwar, from Albert Camus and Boris Pasternak--those who, in one way or another, followed the politics of the unpolitical. The Sukarnoists, and in particular the Communists, acquired their tradition about literary thinking from Lenin and Mao. The two groups sometimes used the same words, but their language was different. Consequently, the discussions that the Manifesto tried to initiate about national culture only resulted in a chaos of a pseudo-dialogue. Without showing any interest in this dialogue, President Sukarno eventually appeared on the scene and he ended this futile activity by banning the Cultural Manifesto.

That ban, and the "cleaning up" of the authors who signed the Manifesto, pushed independent *literati* underground. The regime in power gave them a holiday, and denied them the right to join the chorus of voices on the national ideology. . . . They were set free, so to speak, from ideas as well as from the desire to make concessions--simply because the political structure at that time had rejected them. The ban occurred as a kind of liberation, *malgre soi*. The *literati* of the Manifesto found true independence in this silence: silent in this uneasy exile, they continued to write, not affected by the official literature out there, heavy with repetitive slogans about struggle and revolution.²⁶

This silent freedom--a fine metaphor that invites all sorts of interpretations--was to last until the end of 1965 when the Lekra was rigorously silenced. Not long after the army took effective control over the government institutions, the PKI and its mass organizations were banned. Those Lekra who were not killed in the subsequent massacres were sent to prison camps. Their publications were banned and burnt.

26. Goenawan Mohamad, *Seks, sastra, kita* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1980), p.26.

Sukarno's ban on the Cultural Manifesto had not, of course, resulted in the death of Universal Humanism and its concept of the artist as an individual who has to preserve his personal integrity and artistic honesty. After the purges of 1965-66 against their opponents the Manikebuists were strong enough to propagate their ideals once again--thus ensuring that artists were sent back to the margins of society, the place, in any case, where most of them felt most at ease. In the shadow of the military, social responsibility is no longer a major issue. Chairil Anwar is restored in all his glory. The problem of stultification, however, is not solved.

Similarly, the liquidation of the Lekra did not mean the end of creative realism and the idea that the artist has a strong responsibility for the community he is part of, and that he should put this responsibility above his tendency to follow his own desires and his own voice. The poetry that emerged in the demonstrations leading to Sukarno's eventual downfall had a tone of invocation and conjuration that is strongly reminiscent of the propaganda poetry of Agam Wispy, Bandaharo Harahap, and Anantaguna. The realistic novels that Pramoedya Ananta Toer published at the beginning of the eighties can be read not only as an impressive description of the evils of the colonial system, but also as an indictment of repression and an exhortation to fight it. The fact that they were banned demonstrates both the power and the anxiety of the authorities: it is not always easy to allow free dialogue.

The vehement discussions which Rendra's latest poetry has given rise to may best illustrate how uneasy literary circles in the metropolis and beyond still feel about too emphatic a presence of politics in the field of literature. Once again the heirs of Chairil feel compelled to dismiss politics as a source of inspiration, as a standard of judgment. Their alternative: individual freedom, the personal voice, still resulting in alienation and loneliness. Very romantic indeed, but Chairil's case suggests that it works in times of unrest and movement only, and that the stultification as the result of wine and moon can not be far away. Rendra's poetry may provide some sort of satisfaction to those members of the Lekra who survived the ordeal. The tension between art and politics remains. Of course. It is a universal phenomenon. Human, all too human.

I ask questions
but my questions
rebound on the skulls of salon-poets
who write about wine, moon
while injustice takes place next to them
and eight million children without education
sit numb at the feet of the goddess of the arts

We should stop buying foreign formulas
lecture notes can only give a method
but we ourselves should formulate the situations
we should go out to the main roads
out to the villages
make notes on everything that happens
and experience the real problems.
This is my poem

A pamphlet of a time of emergency
what is the meaning of art
when it is separated from the misery around?

what is the use of thinking
when it is separated from the problems of life²⁷

27. Aku bertanya/ tetapi pertanyaanku/ membentura jidat penyair-penyair salon,/ yang bersajak tentang anggur dan rembulan,/ sementara ketidak-adilan terjadi disampingnya,/ dan delapan juta kanak-kanak tanpa pendidikan/ termangu-mangu di kaki dewi kesenian// --// kita mesti berhenti membeli rumus-rumus asing./ Diktat-diktat hanya boleh memberi metode,/ tetapi kita sendiri mesti merumuskan keadaan./ Kita mesti keluar ke jalan raya/ keluar ke desa-desa,/ mencatat sendiri semua gejala,/ dan menghayati persoalan yang nyata.// Inilah sajakku./ pamflet masa darurat./ Apakah artinya kesenian,/ bila terpisah dari derita lingkungan./ Apakah artinya berpikir,/ bila terpisah dari masalah kehidupan.
From: "Sajak sebatang lisong, in Rendra, *Potret pembangunan dalam puisi* (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi Pembangunan, 1980), p. 31.